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ABSTRACT

This digest summarizes the results of the latest annual survey of state teacher testing programs. State directors of teacher testing programs were contacted in the summer of 1989 and asked to update the data compiled by the American Institutes for Research in 1988. Data indicate that: (1) states commonly use admission tests for applicants to teacher education programs and certification tests for graduates of such programs prior to teaching; (2) 25 states have begun admissions testing, with an additional 2 states expecting to do so in the near future; and (3) 35 states now use certification tests, with an additional 2 states expecting to do so in the near future. A table provides detailed information by state concerning the year the survey data were collected, test use, and passing scores and pass rates for admission tests and certification tests. The table also indicates whether certification tests cover basic skills, professional skills, and/or subject knowledge. (TJH)

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State Testing of Teachers: The 1989 Report

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The number of states that require school teachers to pass competency tests has risen dramatically in 10 years, up by more than 400 percent since 1980. Only 10 states required teacher testing for elementary and secondary schools in 1980. By 1989 that figure has jumped to 44 states.

This digest summarizes the results of the latest annual survey of state teacher testing programs. State directors of teacher testing programs were contacted in the Summer of 1989 and asked to update the data we had compiled in 1988.

Which Tests Do States Commonly Use?

States commonly use two types of tests to assess prospective teachers:

- Admissions tests: for people who apply to teacher education programs
- Certification tests: for graduates of teacher education programs before they begin teaching

Considering admissions tests and certification tests together, only four states (Alaska, Iowa, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Vermont) do not currently assess or plan to assess their teachers. Also, most states rely on nationally developed tests rather than designing tests of their own.

How Many States Use These Tests?

Admissions Tests: Admissions tests help states to screen people before they enroll in teacher education programs. Twenty-five states have now begun admissions testing. Wisconsin expects to use admissions tests this year and Ohio intends to do so, with tests determined by each teacher education program, in 1991.

Though the tendency is for states to rely on existing assessment tests, the instruments are varied. Of the 25 states that now use admissions standards:

18 use existing tests

4 allow colleges of education to choose tests

3 use only tests that are custom designed

Certification Tests: Certification tests are the most common form of teacher assessment. Thirty-five states now use them. Massachusetts begins using them this year and Michigan plans to have a program by 1991.

As with admissions tests, states commonly choose existing certification tests rather than designing their own. Of the 35 states that now use certification tests:

24 use existing tests

9 use tests that are custom designed

2 use a combination of existing tests and tests that are custom designed

Certification tests assess three areas of knowledge:

- **Basic skills**: teachers' competency in reading, writing, and mathematics. Of the 34 states that identified the skills they test, 27 said they test basic skills.
- **Professional skills**: teachers' ability to teach. At least 24 of the states reported that they test professional skills.
- **Subject knowledge**: teachers' expertise in their areas of specialization. Twenty-three of the states said they test subject knowledge.

See the table on the next page for the current status of admissions and certification tests by state.

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		Admission Tests			Certification Tests					
State	Data Revised	Test[1]	Pass[2] Rate	Passing[3] Scores	Test	Pass Rate	Passing Scores	Coverage		
								basic	prof	subj
Alabama	1989	Custom	81		–					
Alaska	1989	–			–					
Arizona	1987	PPST	79 (1986)	173,172,174	Custom	78 (1985)		Yes	Yes	
Arkansas	1989	PPST		170,169,171	NTE				Yes	Yes
California	1988	CBEST	77 (1986)		CBEST	74 (1986)		Yes		
Colorado	1988	CAT	58 (1986)	75%ile	–					
Connecticut	1989	Custom	67 (1987)		NTE					Yes
Delaware	1987	–			PPST	69 (1983-6)	175,175,172	Yes		
Florida	1989	SAT, ACT		40%ile	Custom	82 (1980-8)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Georgia	1989	–			Custom	80 (1978-88)				Yes
Hawaii	1989	–			NTE	76 (1989)	647,651,648	Yes	Yes	Yes
Idaho	1988	–			NTE		646,652,648	Yes	Yes	
Illinois	1987	–			Custom			Yes		Yes
Indiana	1988	–			NTE	88	647,653,646	Yes	Yes	Yes
Iowa	1989	–			–					
Kansas	1989	–			PPST, NTE(PK)	97 (1987)	168,168,170 (642)	Yes	Yes	
Kentucky	1989	ACT or CTBS	76 (1987)	19 Composite 12.5 GES	NTE	94 (1987)	643,646,644	Yes	Yes	Yes
Louisiana	1989	NTE		645,644,–	NTE	90 (1987)	644,645,645	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maine	1989	–			NTE		649,656,648	Yes	Yes	
Maryland	1989	–			NTE		645,648,648	Yes	Yes	Yes
Massachusetts	1988	–			Planned for 1989					
Michigan	1988	–			Planned for 1991					
Minnesota	1989	–			PPST		173,169,172	Yes		
Mississippi	1989	COMP, NTE (GK,CS)		170 (642,647)	NTE		642,647,645	Yes	Yes	Yes
Missouri	1987	SAT, ACT		800,18	–					
Montana	1989	–			NTE	92 (1986)	644,648,648	Yes	Yes	
Nebraska	1989	PPST		170,171,172	PPST		170,171,172			
Nevada	1989	PPST	95 (1985)	169,169,170	Custom			Yes	Yes	Yes
New Hampshire	1989	–			–					
New Jersey	1989	–			NTE	82 (1987)	649,–,–	Yes		Yes
New Mexico	1987	Misc			NTE	88 (1985)	645,644,630	Yes	Yes	Yes
New York	1989	–			NTE	78 (1988)	650,649,646	Yes	Yes	
North Carolina	1989	NTE		639,641,–	NTE	83 (1988)	–,–,644	Yes	Yes	Yes
North Dakota	1989	Misc			–					
Ohio	1989	Misc (Planned for 1991)			Custom			Yes	Yes	Yes
Oklahoma	1987	Misc			Custom	81 (1982-5)				Yes
Oregon	1989	CBEST	77 (1986)		CBEST	80 (1986)		Yes		
Pennsylvania	1989	–			NTE, Custom			Yes	Yes	Yes
Rhode Island	1989	–			NTE		649,657,648	Yes	Yes	
South Carolina	1989	Custom	84 (1989)		NTE, Custom				Yes	Yes
South Dakota	1989	–			–					
Tennessee	1989	PPST		169,169,172	NTE		651,647,643	Yes	Yes	Yes
Texas	1989	PPST	78	171,172,173	Custom	82 (1988)			Yes	Yes
Utah	1987	Misc			–					
Vermont	1989	–			–					
Virginia	1989	–			NTE		639,649,639	Yes	Yes	Yes
Washington	1989	Custom, SAT, ACT			–					
West Virginia	1989	PPST	81 (1987)	172,172,171	Custom		140			Yes
Wisconsin	1987	PPST (Planned for 1989)			–					
Wyoming	1989	CAT		70%ile	–					
Totals		**27**	**Mean = 76**		**37**	**Mean = 85**		**27**	**24**	**23**

[1] ACT = the American College Testing Program. CAT = the California Achievement Test. COMP = the College Outcomes Measures Project. CTBS = the California Test of Basic Skills. SAT = the Scholastic Aptitude Test. PPST = the Pre-Professional Skills Test. CBEST = the California Basic Education Skills Test.

[2] Passing rates may be cumulative, per administration, or for the most difficult subtest. Because of the different definitions, the mean value is only approximate.

[3] Passing scores for the PPST are for the reading, mathematics, and writing portions. Passing scores for the NTE are for the general knowledge, communication skills, and the professional knowledge portions.

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